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DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCES.

GERMAN.

The chairman, Assistant Professor Kern, of the University of Chicago, opened the meeting with the request that topics for the next conference be sent in before the end of the school year. After shortly discussing the two lists of books prescribed for third-year reading, as given on p. 67 of the last *Annual Register*, he asked for suggestions for the list of 1905-6. Associate Professor von Klenze spoke on the desirability of annual reports on publications of interest to teachers of German. A committee of five was appointed for the coming year, consisting of Dr. Kern (chairman), Mrs. Therese T. Dillon (Chicago Normal School), Miss Josephine C. Doniat (Lyons Township High School, Ill.), Mrs. Amanda Gimbel (William McKinley High School, Chicago), and Dr. George A. Mulfinger (South Division High School, Chicago). In November, 1904, it will report on current numbers of the following journals:

(1) *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht*, herausgegeben von Professor Dr. Otto Lyon, Leipzig, Teubner'scher Verlag; (2) *Zeitschrift des allgemeinen deutschen Sprachvereins*, herausgegeben von Dr. Oskar Streicher, Verlag des allgemeinen deutschen Sprachvereins (F. Berggold), Berlin; (3) *Neuphilologisches Centralblatt*, Organ der Vereine für neuere Sprachen in Deutschland, herausgegeben von Dr. W. Kasten, Hannover; (4) *Euphorion*, Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte, herausgegeben von August Sauer, Leipzig und Wien, Carl Fromme's Verlag.

"The International Correspondence of Pupils" was the program announced for the afternoon.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE OF PUPILS.

ITS HISTORY, PURPOSE, AND MANAGEMENT.

JOSEPHINE C. DONIAT,
Lyons Township High School.

This age of scientific research and scientific results, when people at opposite ends of the globe are in closer communication

with one another than was once possible between the inhabitants of neighboring towns, very naturally gives rise to such a movement as the "International Correspondence of Pupils."

It is impossible to tell just when and where the first suggestion was made. In England there were corresponding societies as much as twenty years ago. The members were for the most part young business men who realized the practicability of this means of gaining mastery of a foreign tongue. The International Correspondence Association, founded 1889 by Dr. Kretschmar in Germany, was of a similar nature.

Some ten or twelve years ago certain progressive teachers of modern languages realized the pedagogical value of foreign correspondence for their pupils and introduced it into their schools. But these spasmodic efforts were only the straws that showed which way the wind was blowing. For instance, Miss E. N. Lawrence, the assistant of Mr. W. T. Stead, of the *Review of Reviews*, says, she once had three pupils and managed to get the addresses of a teacher and her pupils in a foreign country, and all of them carried on for a number of years a correspondence which proved to be most interesting and instructive. In Germany we find schools introducing it as early as 1893—one school in Berlin, one in Mannheim, one in Annaberg, and one in Weimar at the Realgymnasium. Here Dr. Markscheffel arranged with two French teachers who were visiting there to have his pupils correspond with theirs. But it was left to France to systematize the movement. It had been carried on successfully from the year 1892 at Chartres, and especially at Draguignan under the direction of Professor Paul Mieille, then teacher of English there, now professor at the Lycée in Tarbes. He was surprised not to find more enthusiasm for English among his pupils, and in seeking to explain their indifference he came to the following conclusion: The pupils do not feel the pulsation of life in the foreign language. The vocabularies seem to them to be so many corpses, empty shells. But the words surely have life, intense life; one must only be able to discover it. How would it be if we brought our pupils into touch with foreign comrades in order to give them a living, personal feeling for the

real meaning of the words they are studying, their independent life, their energy? If the pupils, instead of translating English into French and *vice versa*, were to write English letters to their comrades and receive English letters from them, would they not be induced, even forced, to see life and vigor where they now see only dead abstractions? Professor Mieille now went to work to find English correspondents for his pupils, and this exchange of letters actually brought an element of life into the class-room that was most interesting and suggestive. After carrying this on for some years, however, his pupils and those in England left school, and the movement threatened to die. Then Professor Mieille decided that, instead of acting in an isolated and individual manner, all the French teachers of foreign languages should unite and invite their foreign colleagues to do the same—thus establishing a kind of vast syndicate of international correspondence. In informing one another of the names of their pupils who were willing and able to correspond, they would solve in the most simple manner the question of recruiting the ranks of correspondence.

In an article published by him, in 1896, in the *Revue universitaire*, entitled “L’Alliance française et les professeurs de langues vivantes,” he told his experiences and his plans. The general secretary of the *Revue* was very much interested in the matter and offered to help the movement in every way he could, by printing the lists of names and addresses of those wishing to correspond—thus establishing a center at Paris.

Professor Mieille now wrote to Mr. W. T. Stead, who at once saw the advantages of the plan and showed the letter to Miss Lawrence. As she had already carried out this same idea in her own way, she was immediately interested, and the *Review of Reviews* then agreed to devote a page to printing a list of names, making announcements, etc. This page, entitled “Learning Languages by Letter-Writing,” has been edited by Miss Lawrence.

In January, 1897, Professor Mieille published an article in the *Revue universitaire* and a translation of it in the *Review of Reviews*, stating that they would be ready to receive the names

of pupils wishing to take part in international correspondence, if these names were sent by the teachers of modern languages in the schools attended by these pupils. These articles met with a most enthusiastic response. The first announcement brought 200 names. The distribution, however, caused a good deal of work. There were 70 English girls and 30 boys, while the French boys were 100 and the girls 15.

Soon after the establishment of the bureaux in London and Paris, one was opened in Germany by Dr. K. A. Martin Hartmann. In the winter of 1895-96 he had made a trip to France, sent there by the Saxon government. This brought him in contact with a large number of French colleagues. On March 9, 1897, he read a paper, at a meeting of the Leipzig Society for Modern Philology, on the subject, then quite new in Germany (printed in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für ausländisches Unterrichtswesen*, Leipzig, April, 1897). His suggestion to establish a German center for international correspondence was unanimously adopted. The direction of the bureau was intrusted to Dr. Hartmann, and a man better suited to this arduous task could hardly have been found. Through his energy and indefatigable zeal, resting on deepest conviction, he succeeded in defending his theory against attacks of all kinds, and in spreading it in every direction. He was assisted by his relations to numerous colleagues in Germany and other countries, and by his position as an officer of the Saxon and of the German Societies for Modern Philology. The Leipzig center, which soon undertook also to give addresses of adults, students, teachers, and others, has done much for the study of modern languages in Germany and abroad. Besides the task of sifting incoming addresses, Professor Hartmann has helped the work much by various *Rundschreiben* and announcements sent to schools, as well as by articles in *Neuere Sprachen* (Marburg) and other magazines. In this way he was able to explain his theories, to clear up misunderstandings, and to bring about an equalization of supply and demand.

A few months after the establishment of the Leipzig center, in June, 1897, 1,347 German pupils had already been announced, and by the end of the year 1900, 7,426 persons were corresponding.

In America, Professor Jenkins, of the University of Chicago, was, as far as I have been able to discover, the first to introduce it. He had some pupils at Vanderbilt College engaged in correspondence with French "comrades," and he suggested the idea to Professor Magill, who at once introduced it into the French classes of Swarthmore College.

About the same time, an article published by Professor Mouchet, translated by Professor Magill, and printed in the *Education* (Boston), showed forth the principles and advantages of the movement, and caused its introduction into a great many schools and colleges.

In 1898 the attention of the Modern Language Association was directed to it, and a committee was appointed to investigate it. This committee reported favorably, and a center was established at Swarthmore College, with Professor Magill as its head. An article by Professor O. Thiergen, of Dresden, published in the *SCHOOL REVIEW* (Chicago), 1899, brought a great many requests for addresses from all parts of America to the German center.

Italy and Spain are also becoming interested in this excellent scheme. Even Australia has sent the names of pupils, who are now corresponding with German comrades.

Since March 1, 1901, the movement has had an annual, published in London by W. T. Stead, Professor Mieille, and Professor Hartmann under the threefold title: *Comrades All, Annuaire de la correspondance interscolaire, Internationaler Schülerbriefwechsel*, and containing contributions from pupils and teachers. The plan for this yearbook was made at the Paris exposition, where Mr. Stead, Miss Lawrence, Professor Mieille, and Professor Hartmann met personally to arrange their work. Unfortunately, as I see from Professor Hartmann's latest report, June, 1903, this publication will be discontinued, as the sale of copies did not cover expenses.

At the International Congress for the Teaching of Modern Languages, in Paris, 1900, the question of international correspondence was discussed, and a resolution was unanimously adopted that the congress, having seen the results obtained by

international correspondence in France, England, Germany, America, and Italy; having heard the favorable opinion of a large number of teachers who have practiced it; and having heard the report of Professor Mieille on the question, expresses the wish that correspondence between French and foreign pupils be definitely admitted in foreign language classes as a means of instruction and an application of the direct method; that the teachers of modern languages be encouraged to practice it, so that the familiar or the business letter may have a place in the final examination, instead of a theme or translation. At the International Congress of Secondary Schools at the Sorbonne, August 3, 1900, on the motion of Professor Hartmann, a similar motion was adopted. These unanimous resolutions were a great moral support for the cause. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear that in subsequent years at meetings of teachers and philology associations in France, Germany, England, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and America international correspondence was found on the program and discussed with interest.

It must be mentioned also that the new French course of study, May 31, 1902, officially recognizes the value of international correspondence in modern language classes.

After this brief sketch of the history of international correspondence, it might be well to see how it is carried on in schools, and for this reason I shall give a few of the most important rules. The teacher of modern languages who assumes the supervision of the correspondence sends the names of pupils, stating age, sex, years in school, length of time studying the foreign language, to the respective centers. The German lists are sent to Professor Hartmann, Fechnerstrasse 2, Leipzig, where they receive immediate attention. (I mailed some lists October 11, and by November 9 six of my pupils had already received German letters.) Requests for addresses of French pupils are sent to the office of the *Review of Reviews*, London.

The first letter is written in the pupil's mother-tongue. After that, pupils alternate between letters in their own and in the foreign language, or they may write each letter half in the one, half in the other language. Most of my pupils have preferred

the latter plan. Mistakes made in the foreign language are carefully corrected by the recipient in his own tongue, and returned with the next letter, and I must say that the skill and accuracy shown in the correction of mistakes were a revelation to me.

The choice of subject is, of course, entirely free, except that religious and political questions are to be avoided.

The frequency of letters is subject to arrangement. For the most part, however, pupils themselves realize that much depends on regularity, and they fix a definite time for writing—some once a month, some every three weeks; some write a letter once a month and send a card in between, so that they hear from each other every two weeks. Illustrated postal cards may be exchanged, but they should always be accompanied by an explanation in the pupil's mother-tongue.

Objections have been raised largely by people who have a vague suspicion, but no actual knowledge of international correspondence. They are far outweighed by the favorable opinions of those who speak from their own experience. Professor Thin, of Aberdeen, Scotland, calls it an excellent help and stimulus. He says that correspondence gives a healthy interchange of views on school matters, customs of the countries, descriptions of towns and places, which cannot but be useful and helpful to the young correspondents. M. Friedrich, director of the Girls' School, Solingen, Germany, says that letters give an insight into the emotional and intellectual life of foreign correspondents, as Americans especially give themselves with charming frankness and show great tendency to self-observation. In his experience the German pupils were superior to their partners in their command of the foreign language, and American, not English, girls excelled the Germans in the elegant command of their mother tongue and the broadness of their horizon.

Perhaps a word from the correspondents themselves might be valuable. In this year's report, published by Professor Hartmann are printed five letters from students who are enthusiastic in praise of the benefits derived from correspondence with French comrades. One of these says that he had never cared

for French, and as a consequence had always been a poor student, dragging himself from class to class in constant fear that French might some day break his neck. He took up correspondence merely for the novelty of the plan and the amusement he expected to get. Gradually, however, his interest in the partner generated an interest in his language, and he made great efforts to read and write it correctly.

Dr. Max Freund, now assistant lecturer for German language and literature, University College, Liverpool, speaks in most enthusiastic terms of his correspondence with a French comrade, which has continued for more than five years. One of the most delightful results of the friendship formed by this correspondence was a vacation spent in the home of his partner, and the French student's visit to his home the following year.

These are only a few of the many testimonials that could be cited in favor of international correspondence.

It seems to me that the linguistic advantages resulting from frequent practice in writing and reading letters with particular interest, in the foreign language, must be apparent to all. To be sure, letters may be written as a class-room exercise, but here an artificial interest must be aroused. The living, personal element is wanting. French or German means infinitely more to a pupil who has a French or a German friend.

But more important even than the linguistic advantage is the element of culture involved in this friendly intercourse. The student gains a fund of information about the manners and customs of the foreign nation, and as he grows to respect and even love his partner, he realizes that foreign modes of life, while they may be different, are not, on that account, inferior to his own.

International correspondence, by bringing about friendship between many individuals among foreign people, promotes international friendships and international peace. To sum it all up, I think international correspondence is a "touch of nature which makes the whole world kin."